

**VSH FUTURES
PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT WORKGROUP
MINUTES**

**August 23rd, 2007
10:00 to 12:30
Langevin House
Vermont Technical College
Randolph VT**

Next meeting: September 13th, 2007, 10:00 to 12:30 at The Vermont Tech Enterprise Center. Upper building, Large conference room. Randolph, VT

Present: Linda Corey
Kitty Gallagher
Xenia Williams
Katelin Hoffman
Jean New
Laurie Pontbriand
Zachary Hughes

Chair: Linda Corey

Staff: Nick Nichols, VDH

Check-In/Updates

- Several members requested that cold drinks be available at future meetings.
- Nick will be working with Linda to create a survey to assess/gauge support among consumers and other Vermont stakeholders for developing a more formal certification process for peer support. If this is done in time it will go out in the next edition of the Survivor.
- Linda stated that more guidelines and information about certified peer specialists have been coming out at the federal and state level. This information will be sent out to the workgroup as it becomes available.
- People can sign up for a new newsletter from a national peer specialist program (National Association of Peer Specialists - NAPS). It includes information on what is happening in the world of peer support. For more information, contact Linda Corey.
- Minutes from last meeting were approved.
- On August 31st the Black River Recovery Center in Springfield is having their first recovery celebration.
- Safe Haven is having their picnic on September 6th. If you are interested in attending, contact Linda Corey.
- On September 15th there will be a Recovery Walk in Montpelier to raise awareness about recovery from addictions. It is being sponsored by Friends of

Recovery - Vermont, Vermont Psychiatric Survivors (VPS), and the Vermont Integrated Services Initiative (VISI).

- On September 18th there will be a Statewide Recovery Celebration in Burlington at 108 Cherry Street (right down the hall from the Department of Mental Health offices). Mary Ellen Copeland will be the keynote speaker. There will also be presentations by recovery educators and Beth Tanzman, as well as a video presentation on employment and recovery. Recovery Banners from Washington County Mental Health will be on display.
- On September 28th there will be a daylong training at the Cortina Inn in Killington on recovery from co-occurring mental health and substance disorders. Contact VPS for more information.
- Zack has been involved in a process to make peer support available at Central Vermont Medical Center Emergency room. Peers will have to go through volunteer training, though he wants to make sure the peer support is not part of the hospital. Zack will send out a rough draft of his proposal to the group.

Reports on training and conferences

Keith and Kitty presented on “Climbing the Recovery Mountain Together,” a conference sponsored by the National Association of Peer Specialists (NAPS).

- There were about 250 attendees.
- A code of ethics for peer workers was distributed.
- Most presentations focused on information about peer support activities.
- Keith will be writing an article on the conference. He can send out a copy of it to anyone who is interested.
- There was a lot of open communication and exchanges of ideas at this conference, much more than the typical conference.
- NAPS is still a developing organization.
- Linda added that there is also a national coalition of peer advocates, which is helping to ensure that peers can be more unified in national advocacy.
- Keith is starting to see that there is a clear difference in viewpoints between mental health professionals and mental health peers. This doesn’t mean that the MH professionals are “bad,” but there is a noticeable difference in approach and viewpoints.
- Kitty shared a training of trainers manual from Michigan on how to train peer counselors, as well as other books.
- Kitty especially liked the training of trainers manual and the peer specialist’s code of ethics.
- The manual is good not only for people who want to be a peer specialist but for anyone who is interested in learning about how to provide peer support.
- Currently there is an expectation among formal peer specialist programs that peers go through a formal training to be certified.
- In many situations, certified peer specialists have gone on to become employed at a MH agency.
- Hope was one of the biggest themes coming from the conference.

- In St. Albans the mental health agency is setting up a crisis bed program that will use peer support to follow individuals transitioning out of the crisis program.
- At Home Intervention in Washington County, they focus a lot on transitioning people from crisis respite back into the person's community. Xenia is available to come to St. Albans and do training on how peers can work to help individuals transition out of crisis/diversion programs.
- One of the resources that was shared, *Support the Journey*, had a nice description of recovery: "Recovery is remembering who you are through the darkness and using your strengths to become all that you were meant to be."

Xenia spoke about the Mind Freedom International Conference she attended in CT.

- Despite its history as a radical event, it was very friendly, inviting and collegial.
- Xenia learned about different programs, and several of them had components she would like to incorporate into Vermont's proposed peer respite program. These programs included:
 - Soteria House, which offers peer-run alternatives. (see attachment)
 - Focus on Recovery –United (see attachment)
 - Volunteers in Psychotherapy, which provided mental health treatment for free by psychotherapists who volunteer their time.
 - Peer support on hearing voices
 - Making holistic medicine effective and affordable
 - "Intentional peer support" training

Xenia also spoke about a great book on peer support that she has been reading: *A Fight to Be-A Psychologist's Experience From Both Sides of the Locked Door*, by Ronald Bassman.

Discussion of the Workgroup's Recommendations:

What else do we want to say about:

- 1) Peer Crisis Respite for people who do not find medications helpful,**
- 2) Implementing a Certified Peer Specialist Program,**
- 3) Peer Support for People Transitioning back into the Community?**

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Is this something Vermont should prioritize?
- 2) What should it look like?
- 3) How should it be run?
- 4) What would the staffing look like?
- 5) How much would it cost?

- Xenia will be meeting with a subcommittee today to develop a proposal to visit two peer-run crisis respite programs that are available to people who do not find

- medications helpful. One of the programs is a peer crisis respite program called Rose House in Poughkeepsie, NY. The other program is Stepping Stones in NH.
- Xenia would like to see a bibliography of books and articles written by peers which could be used to develop a library of recovery materials for each MH agency. This could help new staff develop a better understanding and appreciation for peer support.
 - The workgroup could request a formal training on one of the certified peer specialist programs. Members of the workgroup are also interested in having someone from the Michigan Peer Support Training program come to Vermont and do a “Train the Trainers” so peers from Vermont could teach the program.
 - It was suggested that Vermont could set up multiple “tracks” for consumers who are interested in becoming peers supporters. One track would focus on giving peers a formal certification, which would allow the supports they provide to be paid for by Medicaid. Another track would be for peers who did not want to be connected to a mental health agency or bill for support that is provided.
 - If we have different levels and types of peer support, it should be based on the same core training.
 - Linda commented that if Vermont wanted to have a system where peer support is Medicaid-reimbursable, we would need to have a longer process that involved buy-in from the federal and state level.
 - One Workgroup member suggested that peer services should be rolled out in a way that avoids competition with professional services, so both sides are not fighting for the same resources.
 - Zach asked, “if we start to use Medicaid funding for peer services, does that turn peer support into a medical model approach?”
 - Linda believes that Vermonters should have multiple options-formal peer support that is certified and funded by Medicaid and more informal peer support that is not certified or funded by Medicaid.
 - Linda also commented that if the group waits too long to create recommendations, we may lose our funding that is earmarked for peer support.
 - The workgroup voted to support having a team attend two programs (Rose House and Stepping Stones) to video tape what they are doing and bring this back to the workgroup. Nick may be interested in attending the visit.
 - Kitty feels it is important for Vermont to always support choices.
 - Jean shared a story in which she was used as peer support for someone who was going into crisis, and her peer support helped prevent the person from going to the hospital. She stated that more training for her on how to provide peer support would have been very helpful.
 - Nick asked if the group could agree on one training model. Linda commented that many of the different national models that currently exist incorporate similar components.
 - Members of the workgroup agreed that Vermont should have a more formal, standardized training on peer support.
 - The Workgroup agreed to meet monthly in an effort to finish its recommendations soon.

Directions to The Vermont Tech Enterprise Center

The next meeting will be located in the Vermont Tech Enterprise Center in Randolph, Vermont right off Interstate 89. The meeting will be in the brown brick building on the left as you drive in the driveway. Please enter through the glass door, turn left in the reception area and the training room is on the left.

Coming North on I-89:

Get off at Exit 4 from I-89. At the end of the ramp, turn left on VT RT 66 West and travel .6 mile; turn left into the Vermont Tech Enterprise Center.

Coming South on I-89:

Get off at Exit 4 from I-89. At the end of the ramp, turn right on VT RT 66 West and travel .5 mile; turn left into the Vermont Tech Enterprise Center.

Coming from Downtown Randolph:

Travel approx. 2 miles from downtown Randolph on VT RT 66 East; turn right into the Vermont Tech Enterprise Center.